

?Alert observers, persistent police and bad engine result in arrest of alleged bank robbers Friday

Written by Marty Randall

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? Thanks to a number of alert observers and a blown truck engine, a trio of alleged bank robbers soon found themselves behind bars in Scott County on Friday, January 2.

Indiana Bank and Trust on U.S. Highway 31 South in Austin was not only the last bank in the county to be robbed in 2008, it was the first in 2009. Just before 11 a.m. on Friday, Austin police officers Col. Lonnie Noble and Patrolman Crystal Schapson were dispatched to IBT in response to a report of two suspicious males walking around in back of the building.

As the officers were en route to the bank, dispatchers advised them that a robbery had occurred at that location.

They arrived in time to see two white males running across the parking lot of Austin Christian Church, located directly south of the bank, and jump into a white Dodge pickup truck.

Officers reacted by heading to the parking lot in their cars, only to have both of the vehicles struck by the pickup as it exited the parking lot and headed south on U.S. 31.

The police pursued the pickup, which began emitting smoke from the engine compartment. When the suspects' truck reached the highway's intersection with State Road 56, it turned west onto S.R. 56 and then gained entry to Interstate 65 at the interchange.

By that time, several police cars from Austin, Scottsburg and Scott County departments were in pursuit of the pickup and its occupants, and the entourage continued southbound on I-65.

Then fate, in the form of a blown engine, entered the scene at the 24 mile marker. The truck stopped, and one man, later identified as Thomas E. Davidson, 41, Louisville, Ky., fled on foot. He was captured after a short foot pursuit. The other two truck occupants, brothers Robert W. Davidson, 38, and Samuel I. Davidson, 36, both of the same address in Louisville, were placed in custody at the scene. Money believed to have been taken from IBT was recovered from the vehicle.

According to a release from Col. Noble, who serves as Director of Public Safety in Austin, brothers Robert and Thomas allegedly entered the bank and demanded money. Samuel Davidson, also a brother, was the driver of the pickup during the robbery.

In a further statement, Col. Noble said that the impact with his patrol car caused some injury to his knee, shoulder and back. The pickup struck Ptl. Schapson's car twice, and she experienced back pain from those impacts. Both were treated at Scott Memorial Hospital after the suspects had been transported to the Scott County Security Center.

Interviews of each suspect were conducted by officers at the jail on Friday afternoon, and the men were held on initial robbery charges through the weekend.

Scott County Prosecutor Jason Mount planned to conduct initial court hearings for the trio on Tuesday morning, January 6, in Scott Circuit Court.

Robert and Thomas Davidson were scheduled to be charged with conspiracy to commit robbery and two counts of robbery, all Class C felonies. Robert was also to face a charge of fleeing law enforcement, a Class D felony. Thomas was to have two of those charges filed against him.

Samuel Davidson was to be charged with conspiracy to commit robbery and aiding robbery, both Class C felonies, as well as fleeing and battery to a law enforcement officer, a Class D felony.

Officers with the Indiana State Police, Sellersburg post, assisted at the scene and with the suspects.

The ISP and Austin police continue to investigate the bank's robbery that occurred on December 8.

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In that incident, a lone robber entered the bank, demanded cash and then fled on foot, reportedly to a vehicle parked on VanCampen Road south of the church. Similarities between the December 8 and January 2 robberies were being examined, it was learned.